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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000983

SIPDIS

EUR/CE FOR GLANTZ, OSD FOR MITCHELL

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TAGS: PREL MARR PL

SUBJECT: POLES CAUTIOUS BUT OPEN-MINDED ON U.S. MD PROPOSAL

REF: A. A: WARSAW 972

1B. B: IIR 6 878 0368 09

Classified By: Political Counselor F. Daniel Sainz for reasons 1.4 b and d

11. (C) SUMMARY. In the face of overwhelmingly negative press coverage, Polish officials' initial skepticism regarding the new U.S. offer on Missile Defense (MD) has evolved slightly to a posture of wait-and-see (but not too long). Both FM Sikorski and PM Tusk have issued guardedly encouraging public statements (ref A), and the head of MFA's Security Policy Department told poloffs that pending more details, his office would probably propose that the MFA recommend Polish participation in the revised U.S. MD program. All interlocutors at MFA and MOD (ref B) asked for written briefing materials at an early date. Foreign Minister Sikorski has come under fire from all quarters as the chief architect of what most Poles currently regard as a failed government strategy of striking an MD deal with the outgoing Bush administration. As a result, he will seek to demonstrate the utmost caution before signing on to a new MD system. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Shortly after his September 17 meeting with the U.S. delegation headed by USD Flournoy, FM Sikorski noted that the new U.S. approach could be more interesting than the previous MD proposals. In a September 23 interview with *Rzeczpospolita*, Sikorski was asked whether the U.S. MD decision was a success or failure for Poland's foreign policy; he replied that the decision means "Poland is still in the game and has prospects of getting security benefits." The Minister rejected arguments that Poland could have locked in the Bush administration proposals through quick ratification of the August 2008 agreement, noting that Poland cannot "force a superpower to do something they are not willing to do." Poloffs followed up with MFA Security Policy and Americas Department officials as well as analysts at the MFA-affiliated Polish Institute for International Relations (PISM) to glean Polish views and encourage a positive Polish response to the U.S. proposals.

HATED THE ROLL-OUT BUT WILLING TO TALK MORE ABOUT STRATEGY

13. (C) According to PISM analysts, neither Tusk nor Sikorski were happy with the way the U.S. decision was handled. U.S. media leaks before arrival of the U.S. delegation queued the Poles to view SM-3 as a "downgrading" of the original EIS plan. On the positive side, PISM's view was that U.S. policy toward Russia was not/not the driving force in the U.S. decision. In spite of widespread media reports suggesting that the U.S. sacrificed EIS for the sake of better relations with Moscow, PISM analysts accepted U.S. explanations that effectiveness, cost, and threat considerations shaped the U.S. decision. Moreover, PISM noted that defense and other technical experts generally view the new U.S. proposal as qualitatively better than the

original MD plan -- even in the absence of more detailed information on SM-3 deployments. Analysts added that Sikorski and other GOP officials are coming around to this view as well.

¶4. (C) The Americas Department expressed concern with Defense Secretary Gates' September 17 comment that the original U.S. deployment schedule had been delayed in part because of Poland's (and the Czech Republic's) failure to ratify the August 2008 Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement (BMDA). Americas Director Artur Orzechowski noted that the U.S. had waited almost a year for the Obama administration to determine its policy. PISM suggested that Gates' comments had created political problems for the Tusk government, since the political opposition, mainly from Law and Justice (PiS), is now criticizing the GOP's "delay" in presenting the BMDA immediately for ratification.

SOME CONFUSION ON SUBSTANCE OF NEW PROPOSAL

¶5. (C) Most interlocutors expressed confusion about timing questions and asked about the solidity of U.S. commitment to the proposal. Deputy Director Marek Szczygiel of the MFA Security Affairs Department asked whether the "adaptive" nature of the current U.S. MD plan meant that Poland could not be sure that a prospective U.S.-Polish agreement to place SM-3 missiles in Poland would be carried out. Director Orzechowski of the Americas Department said he was unsure if missiles would remain in Poland or be subject to relocation; he also thought the later-phase anti-ICBM interceptors might not go forward if the Iranian threat disappeared. In this context, U.S. comments about the virtues of flexibility and

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mobility raised doubts: both PISM and the Security Policy Department asked if the proposed site in Redzikowo would be mobile or fixed.

¶6. (C) PISM analysts noted some uncertainty about whether Poland will be the sole site in northern/central Europe for the SM-3 system. Analysts asked whether there would be competitors, and mentioned Romania and Turkey as most likely "contenders" for this role.

¶7. (C) All interlocutors commented on Patriot. Szczygiel of the Security Policy Department characterized the system's deployment here as a "litmus test" for cooperation with the U.S., and reiterated that Poles expect the U.S. to fulfill its obligations under the Declaration of Strategic Cooperation (DSC). Orzechowski said it was not clear during the formal U.S. presentation whether after 2012, Patriot equipment would be permanently stationed here along with the garrison.

WAY AHEAD

¶8. (C) Adam Kobieracki, Director of the Department of Security Policy, said the revised U.S. MD plan was not the catastrophe the media describe, and his office would likely recommend that Poland take part in the program, upon receipt of adequate written information. However, PISM warned that negotiations on the BMDA annex will likely be tough: Poles will conduct more strenuous cost-benefit analysis of the new program and seek assurances of U.S. commitment. Most importantly, GOP officials will not be able to sell a new agreement to the Parliament or Polish public opinion strictly on the basis of helping its U.S. ally -- they will have to demonstrate concretely that cooperation with the U.S. enhances Poland's defense and national security. Politically, the GOP will have to be perceived as driving a hard bargain with the U.S.

¶9. (C) All our contacts recommended senior bilateral consultations as soon as possible to demonstrate continued U.S. commitment. Orzechowski suggested Secretary Clinton visit Warsaw in November -- alternatively, Sikorski could

meet with the Secretary in Washington November 2-4 or perhaps at the Berlin Security Conference. Both PISM and the Americas Department suggested non-military topics to supplement a Strategic Dialogue, which should not be viewed as focused solely on security issues. PISM recommended holding the first consultations in Warsaw to avoid possible opposition claims that the GOP was answering a "summons" from Washington. Kobieracki recommended that a senior USG official brief U.S.-based Polish media on the MD decision, as well as on the way ahead in Poland.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Foreign Minister Sikorski has come under intense criticism for the Polish Government's "failure" on MD. He has been faulted across the political spectrum for concluding the MD talks either too late (and not locking in the Bush administration) or too soon (and not waiting for the incoming U.S. administration). Some media analysts speculate that Sikorski may soon lose his status as the most highly rated Cabinet official in public opinion polls. Sikorski's accountability for MD developments that most Poles have viewed negatively to date explains the Minister's caution toward the revised U.S. MD concepts. The MFA will continue to seek assurances that the current U.S. plans are reliable, and not subject to changing threat assessments. Sikorski and his team will doubtless want to demonstrate a deliberate and methodical approach to future MD talks, and will want to receive in writing as many details as possible.

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